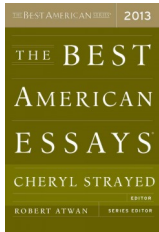


## Information, Answers & Reviews

# The Best American Essays 2013



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*The Best American Series* may seem like a boring reading choice, but whenever I choose a volume from it, I am rewarded to discover new and unfamiliar authors. Plus, reading this series helps me to nudge my book selections in fresh directions. Wilderness writer Cheryl Strayed edited *The Best American Essays 2013* and her intriguing selections offered lots of surprises. Here are examples of a few of the titles: "Free Rent at the Totalitarian Hotel," "Highway of Lost Girls," "My Father's Women," "I'm Jumping off the Bridge," and "Confessions of an Ex-Mormon." In "I'm Jumping off the Bridge" Kevin Sampsell, a bookseller at Portland's Powell Books—my favorite bookstore in the world, described dealing with a suicidal patron and how artfully he handled it. But as the essay continues, you realize that the bookseller had considered suicide himself.

In the chilling "Highway of Lost Girls" Vanessa Veselka decided to investigate the murder of some female hitchhikers in the 1980s. During that time period, she had a terrifying experience while hitchhiking. A truck driver had exited the highway and transported her down a back road. He stopped and pulled out a knife demanding that she climb in the [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on November 12, 2013

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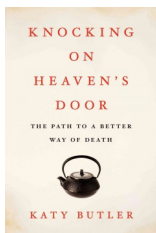
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# Knocking on Heaven's Door



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If you are taking care of a very sick parent or other close relative, this is the book for you. Katy Butler, a journalist, tells the end-stories of both her parents. She lived on the left coast; they, in

Connecticut when one day her father, Jeffrey, suffered a severe stroke. Shortly after the stroke, his cardiologist recommended a pacemaker, and her mother and Katy agreed. This was without talking about any of the ramifications while he was well and could understand the consequences. His GP was against it; he had seen too many patients with hearts ?outliving? the rest of their bodies.

Jeffrey recovered somewhat but by this time his type A wife has made him surrender both his belt and his wallet. The former Wesleyan history professor was bored silly. During a week visit, Katy arranged for her dad to be picked up by a special van and brought to the pool where he used to swim. Katy made the journey with him two days to show him the ropes, and bought him a new watch that thrilled him. His wife had also hidden his nice silver watch. Katy?s dad loved the cheap watch and the sense of independence it gave him. After Katy left, he continued the van/swimming trips for a long time.

The book also covers Katy?s extremely difficult relationship with her mother. Did you guess that there were issues? Katy?s two brothers took little part in caretaking their Dad because they did not get along with their mother either. She was very controlling about their diet as adults, their haircuts, their clothes, and especially their failures in life. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on November 7, 2013

[Knocking on Heaven's Door: the path to a better way of death](#)

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## Oscar



One doesn't usually think of Sylvester Stallone in terms of comedy. OK, I'll admit some people think of all his acting as comedic, however most of us tend to think of Stallone as an action adventure star or as Rocky. [Oscar](#) is a departure from his normal role. This movie, loosely based on a French play of the same name by Claude Magnier, features Stallone as gangster boss Angelo Provolone trying to honor his father's wish that he would put aside his gangster ways and become an honest businessman. [Read more](#)

Posted by Keith C. on November 4, 2013

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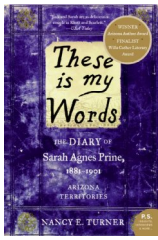
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## Read-A-Likes for These Is My Words: the Diary of Sarah Agnes Prine, 1881-1901,

# Arizona Territories by Nancy Turner



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In August 2013, the Books Plus library book club read the book These Is My Words: the Diary of Sarah Agnes Prine, 1881-1901, Arizona Territories by Nancy Turner. The book is very loosely based on her grandmother's memories of moving to the Arizona Territory and what life was like there on the frontier. Fast paced and character driven, the author brings to life the hardships of ranching before electricity and cars. Sarah is a no nonsense woman who survives and thrives through happy times and sad.

Other books featuring pioneer women include:

A Lantern in Her Hand by Bess Streeter Aldrich. Written in 1928, this has become an American classic and was a best seller at the time of publication. The story is also based on the author's ancestor, in this case her mother who traveled by covered wagon to Nebraska in 1865. Another woman who was not broken by hardship and strife on the great plains.

Boone's Lick by Larry Mc Murtry. Beginning in 1865, Mary Margaret Cecil is ready to call it quits with her freight hauler husband, but first she has to find him. With her extended family of kids, Pa, brother-in-law and others, they head West from Missouri.

And just for fun, How the West Was Won by Louis L'Amour. Noone writes sweeping sagas like L'Amour. You may remember the 1962 movie starring some of the biggest names of the day. It won three Oscars. The book is even better. Remember Linus Rawlings, survivor of Indian Country or Liliith Prescott who ran away from home and married a gambler. The book features many characters with great stories.

Compared with the challenges faced by these women, the stories in the books makes frozen computers, cars that won't start and clogged up drains seem like a minor inconvenience.

Posted by Luann D. on October 31, 2013

These is my words : the diary of Sarah Agnes Prine, 1881-1901 : Arizona territories : a novel

Fiction

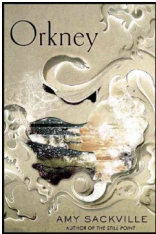
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## Bride of the Sea



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If you like the sea, especially bordering isolated northern islands, this novel might appear to you. It's atmospheric and literary with beautiful descriptions of the light, the beach and the Atlantic. Throughout the book, the sea is more threatening than warming.

It's also very similar to a modern fairy tale. A literature professor, who by the way studies fairy tales, falls in love with his young student. He invents an end-of-term party to get to know her better and then begins to date her. In fine restaurants, she is half-wild and licks her fingers and then his while eating lobster. She is mum about her past and her family. She often arrives with wet hair that is so blond it looks white; he later discovers that she has webbed feet. They marry, but without any family or friends to witness it. Her choice of a honeymoon spot is the wild Orkney coast where it is cold, rainy and remote.

Richard is obsessed with his young wife who is never named. Instead of working on his new book, he gazes at her through their vacation cottage's wide windows. She spends most of her days outside wandering the beach or just watching the sea. Nights they have sex, and then she wakes up terrified by her dreams. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on October 31, 2013

[Orkney](#)

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## Would You Kill the Fat Man?



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Here's the scenario. Walking across a bridge over a railroad one day, you notice that five people are tied to the tracks below. Worse, you also spot a speeding train approaching, with no sign of slowing down—it's sure to plow through the five people, killing them. Suddenly you see the only possible way to save them: an exceptionally large man—large enough to derail an oncoming train, it just so happens—is leaning on the bridge's railing above the tracks, resting. Now's your chance: do you push the man over the railing, killing him, but saving the five people tied to the tracks? Or do you refrain from pushing him, thereby sparing his life but effectively allowing the five below to die? [Read more](#)

Posted by Ryan S. on October 30, 2013

[Would you kill the fat man? : the trolley problem and what your answer tells us about right and wrong](#)

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